



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ethical Considerations of Employment of Married Women from the Religious Perspective

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT	
<p>Article History: <i>Received: 02 November 2021</i> <i>Revised: 11 January 2022</i> <i>Accepted: 25 March 2022</i></p>	<p>SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES: This research is about knowing the important factors to be considered by a working woman's in religious point of view. Women play a very important role in religious; First and foremost, they bear the future generations of human being. They are the mothers that nurture the future leaders of the world; and They are the wives and the trustee of their husbands. To understand more about the rules of religious regarding women, we need to first understand regarding the position of women in religious. Why she is created, what are her purpose in this world, how she was created and how she is different and similar from men? By doing this, understanding her and the rulings that governs her in religion can be easier.</p> <p>METHOD AND FINDING: In this research, which was conducted with a qualitative method and analytical approach, it was found that under the rules of religious, working is permissible for women but she is bounded by certain rules that are for her own benefit. Woman is created as a servant of God so it is her primary duty to serve God. A woman also can be a wife and mother so she also has her duties and responsibilities that must be taken into consideration before planning to work.</p> <p>CONCLUSION: The research results showed that procuring livelihood is not a woman's obligation and responsibility but it is permissible for her to work provided that she will not neglect her primary duties and responsibilities. Working and having an employment for women has its benefits and disadvantage so both must be taken into consideration and benefits should be greater than its disadvantage.</p>	
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Introduction

Paradise lies under the feet of the mothers and there is also a saying that says: “behind a successful man, there is a woman.” We can also hear that the future of the society depends upon the hands of the mothers. These are words addressed to mothers and wives in the society noting what are the vital roles they held in our society.

In this changing world, it is common to see married women working outside of their homes and it is considered normal. We can see men that are the ones staying in the house taking the duties of the mother since their wives are working outside. We can also see both parents working and their children are left to other person to take care.

These kinds of situations are seen in religious communities nowadays; but:

- What are the ethical considerations of this matter according to religious?
- How does religion address these issues and what it is suppose to be in the family when it comes to religious point of view?
- Who must be working outside and who must be there to take care of the children according to religious?
- What are the possible benefits and consequences when a married woman is working outside their houses?

In general, women working are more dominant nowadays than what it is in the past. Women nowadays are seen in the industry rather than just staying in their houses. They are the created beings to cause the balance of this world as according to the holy Quran:

“And that He created the pairs, the male and the female.” (Quran, 53: 45)

Because of this, it is important to point important factors to be considered in religious point of view, that will be addressed in this research.

Women in Religious Logic

Islam regards the woman as an independent, perfect member of society and places no difference between her and the man as far as human virtues go. *(Misbah Yazdi et al, 1991)*

Islam establishes true and complete equality between man and woman, summed up in the Prophet's saying:

Women are full sisters of men. (Khayat, 2003)

Religion pays attention to all details regarding the role of women in society, their relationship with men as mothers, wives, sisters, and

daughters. It provides a charter of rules and regulation to make sure that women are protected and respected in every possible scenario in society. Sex, race, caste, creed, financial status, etc do not in any way define the greatness of a person. Both men and women are creatures of Allah almighty made for worship and servitude. Both have been assigned different roles and are in no way superior to the other except on grounds such as morality. *(Saiffee et al, 2012)*

Unlike other religious books, there is no mention in the Quran that a woman has been created of some inferior material, or that she has any parasitic and leftist aspect. Islam does not support the notion of the people who suppose that the spouse of Adam was created of his left ribs. Islam has no contemptuous

view of woman in regard to her nature and innate character. (*Mutahhari, 2015*)

Men and women, although having many aspects in common, also possess unique characteristics. One such characteristic is that women are delicate, beautiful, and likable beings. They are charming, attractive, and lovable; whereas men are charmed, attracted by and love women's qualities. (*Amini, 2002*)

Man differs from the woman to a large extent from a psychological viewpoint. Women are normally more emotional, while in man, the intellect dominates over the emotions. This difference is directly related to their nervous systems. (*Misbah Yazdi, 1991*)

Men and women differ in terms of some physical and spiritual features; rationality and wisdom is predominant

in men, while in women, emotion and affection prevail; women are more attracted to literature, arts, and ornaments, and they love peace, whereas men have more tendency towards science, thoughtfulness, and work. (*Dehshahri, 2016*)

A woman is an emotional being whose emotions are dominant over her logic. She is naiver and more sensitive than a man. She can be deceived more easily and has less control over her emotional desires. She cannot decide wisely once she is upset. She can be amused or made upset with little effort. (*Bani, 2015*)

Man is usually more aggressive and quarrelsome, which qualities do not accord with motherly sentiments and care. On the contrary, woman is more convivial and peaceable in her feelings, in particular, motherly affection

which can be regarded as the main source of her other emotions, the driving force behind her most willing acceptance of these heavy duties, of which she makes ideals in life. (*Misbah Yazdi, 1991*)

Undoubtedly, there is no discrepancy in Islam between men and women as far as their relationship to Allah in concerning as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. (*Patoari, 2019*)

The Quran mentions:

“Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men

and the patient women and the humble men and the humble women, and the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember-Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward”.

(*Quran, 33: 35*)

“Surely (as for) those who disbelieve, even if they had what is in the earth, all of it, and the like of it with it, that they might ransom themselves with it from the punishment of the day of resurrection, it

shall not be accepted from them, and they shall have a painful punishment”.
(*Quran, 5: 36*)

Women’s Employment from a Religious Perspective

According to religion, working is not a right but a duty and men and women are no different in this regard. Women must also perform their social duties and they are free in choosing their occupation. However, taking heed of the special physical and spiritual genesis of women, not all lines of work are consistent with their eminence or abilities and other members of the society. Women are exquisite, sensitive, and beautiful beings. Because of this exquisiteness and beauty, they have much allure and influence with men.
(*Amini, 2011*)

There is no prohibition for women employment in religion. Allah says in the holy Quran:

“And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask Allah of His grace; surely Allah knows all things”.
(*Quran, 4: 32*)

“...That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female...”.
(*Quran, 3: 195*)

Both man and woman have, under Islam, equal rights to take up any profession. During the lifetime of the Prophet, some women worked in agriculture, some tended animals, or worked in weaving and

cloth making, or in home industries or other trades. Some women were nurses caring for those who were ill or tending men injured in battle. (*Khayat, 2003*)

It is right that earning a family's living is an obligatory deed of the man, and that women are not Islamically (as per Islamic laws) responsible for this act. Women, however, should also have a job. In Islam, idleness is discredited and reproached. (*Amini, 2002*)

Regarding idleness, Imam Sadiq is reported to have stated:

"The Almighty Allah hates too much sleep and too much rest."
(*Kulaini, 1987, Vol 5: 84*)

Muslim woman is not forbidden to go out of her home for necessity and she is even allowed to be employed. In the time of the Prophet, women went out to the

market or their farms. The prophet did not stop a woman in her iddat (Waiting period for a woman) from going out of her house in case of necessity.

Jabir ibn Abdullah says husband of my aunt divorced her and when she was spending her iddat in the house she wanted to go outside of the house to get some of her date palms harvested and sold. Someone halted her, saying that you are not allowed to go out of the house during iddat. She went to the Prophet to whether she could go outside of the house or not and the Prophet said:

"You go out and get the date trees harvested (and sold) so that you may be able to do some other good work."
(*Patoari, 2019*)

In reference to every Muslim man and Muslim woman, the Prophet suggests that *“he [or she] does some work, and thus he benefits himself and can give away in charity”*. The daughter of the prophet Hadrat Zahra also used to work at home. (Kulaini, 1987, Vol. 5:86)

So for a woman, work is a privilege, not a duty. She may undertake it whenever her circumstances allow. It is man’s duty to take full care of her, looking after all her needs for her living, even though she may be rich. (Khayat, 2003)

At the same time, it is true that in Islam women are permitted to work and have an employment but it must be in accordance with the Islamic rulings. Islam provides rules for women’s safety, security and for her well being and

they must adhere to these rulings whether they are working or staying at home. If the work performed by the woman demands that she gets out of her house, she must get the permission of her husband in case she is married. According to the religious opinion of Imam Khomeini:

“Her getting out of the house must be permitted by her husband.” (Ref: Ma'arif Books, 2005)

Values and Norms Governing the Employment of Married Women

Being a woman, she can be at the same time a servant of God, a wife and a mother so she must not neglect her duties. She is permitted to work as long as it is not a hindrance to all of her primary duties as a servant of God, a wife and a mother. Human beings are not created

without having any purpose.

Allah mentions in the Quran:

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me”. (Quran, 51: 56)

Acts of worship are duties incumbent on every Muslim, male or female, while bringing benefit and preventing harm are duties incumbent upon all Muslims, males and females collectively. Such duties must be fulfilled. If they remain undone, everyone in the Muslim community is at fault and incurs a sin. (*Khayat, 2003*)

A woman being a human being; it is her primary duty to worship God. That includes the daily obligatory prayers, observing fasting in the month of Ramadhan, performing Hajj if she is able, giving Zakah (obligatory charity) and other things that is prescribed to

her by God such as observing modesty and wearing hijab (Islamic veil) and the likes.

Being a woman, she can also be a mother. A mother plays one of the most social roles and expressions of human towards human. This requires a lot of self abandonment, generosity and kindness. That is the reason “mother” is the most beautiful word, the symbol of love and self-sacrifice. Children shall be thankful to their mother. She is not only a creator of new life but also helps to form future generations. (*Gezova, 2015*)

A woman is created to bear and raise children in the best possible way. (*Saifee et al, 2012*)

Pregnancy and childbirth are sacred duties which are arduous, time consuming and momentous. Man's reproductive

role is instantaneous, while the woman has to bear the burden of pregnancy for several months. If we add to it the time she must spend on suckling, nurture, cherishing and bringing up her child, then we see that her role is much longer than the man's. (*Misbah Yazdi, 1991*)

In the holy Quran, pregnancy is described as hardship and weakness upon weakness as it stated:

“his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings and his weaning takes two years”. (*Quran, 31: 14*)

In a similar verse, Allah says:

“...his mother bear him and with trouble did she bring him forth; and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months...”. (*Quran, 46: 15*)

Childbirth must also by no means be regarded as something instantaneous. Rather, it is preceded, accompanied and followed by pains, indispositions and possible side-effects. It is further known that after delivery, the woman needs rest for the first few weeks, so as to regain her normal disposition. (*Misbah Yazdi, 1991*)

After the struggles of pregnancy and pain of giving birth, a woman is faced in another challenge in her life of taking care of the new born child. She has the duty of breastfeeding and this task is difficult for the mother but is so important for a child.

The Most High God says:

“And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling; and their

maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage...". (Quran, 2: 233)

The important fact is that the mother's milk affects the baby's character and according to the narration from Imam Ali:

"Do not choose foolish women to feed (your children) with their milk, because the milk makes their base qualities penetrated into the child". (Hurr Amili, 1988, Vol. 15: 188)

The mother's presence and care is irreplaceable during the first months of a child's life. A little child is entirely vulnerable and for his survival he needs somebody to look after him. *(Gezova, 2015)*

Mother is the caretaker of her house and her offspring.

Her duty includes making it sure that the family eats healthy foods and living in a clean and safe environment. One of her important duty is feeding her children. Health or illness, beauty or ugliness, even good or bad temperedness, and cleverness of children are all related to the way they are fed. The responsibility of education, training, and running of this sensitive social base lies with the women.

Therefore women, through their deeds and behavior towards their family, can determine the deterioration or progress of a nation. Thus, the job of a housewife is sensitive, respectable and revered. *(Amini, 2002)*

The mother has to direct the child towards righteousness and to keep him away from corruption through presenting proper alternatives which can

occupy him, in order that he will not be led on towards what is corrupted, a psychological barrier will be established between him and corruption, and a model will be set forth for him in order to follow after in this frame. *(Ma'arif Books, 2005)*

Parents in general and mothers in particular are responsible towards their societies. They can serve their society by bringing up pious children. On the other hand, carelessness about their responsibility will be questioned on the Day of Judgment. Small children of today are the men and women of tomorrow. Whatever lessons they learn now, they will practice in future societies. If families improve, the society will progress, because societies are no more than a collection of families. Tomorrow's world will suffer with today's bad-

tempered, stubborn, ignorant, cowardly, materialistic, nasty, careless, selfish and cruel children. On the contrary, tomorrow's world will benefit from today's children who are honest, well mannered, generous, brave, just, and trustworthy etc. Thus, the progress or deterioration of a society is in the hands of women. *(Amini, 2002)*

Being a woman, she is also a wife. Wife has a vital and very effective role to play in bringing about stability and happiness to the family. She serves as a security for her husband. She is also the means of love, compassion and tranquility; As mentioned in the holy Quran:

“And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them,

and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect". (Quran, 30: 21)

Becoming a wife is very important step in a woman's life. *(Chand, 2009)*

The woman must bear in mind that her relationship with her husband has a religious priority and that it comes at the head of everything else as long as this relationship is included within the frame of the religious standards. Such an importance is attached to the woman's relationship with her husband to the extent that it is considered to be a basis for the woman's struggle for God's sake. *(Ma'arif Books, 2005)*

The Holy Prophet stated:

"If a woman does not perform her duty as a spouse, she has not done her duty to Allah". (Hakim Naisaburi, 2002, Vol. 2: 552)

Being a wife, her primary responsibility is making it sure that she is performing the rights of her husband upon her. By fulfilling her duties, she is fulfilling his rights. It is natural that the man looks towards his wife and family as a source of comfort and relief. Therefore, she should anticipate his expectations and needs. Wife must be the source of happiness to her husband, the source of love care and respect. *(Amini, 2002)*

This is stated in a very beautiful verse of the holy Quran:

“And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect”.
(Quran, 30: 21)

Allah has created men and women as company for one another and so that they can procreate and live in peace and tranquility. (Patoari, 2019)

It is also ascribed to The Noblest Prophet that he said:

“...The best woman among you... is the easy coming, the soft, and the obedient. She is the one who does not sleep while her husband is still angry till he is pleased,

and the one who preserves her husband while he is away from her. She is one of God’s workers, and God’s worker is not disappointed”. (Kulaini, 1987, Vol. 5: 325)

Consequences of Married Women’s Employment According to Religious Ethics

For married women, working has a lot of advantage and disadvantage. It can have positive impacts or negative impacts in her personal life, family life, social life, and in the community. Working for married women benefits more about financial matters but it can also be detrimental to her health, both physical and spiritual and her relationship with her family.

1. Positive Impacts

Work has many advantages; for instance, making individuals financially independent, which is a noble goal. (Kheyamy, 2018)

It is mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad said:

“Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, David used to eat from the earnings of his manual labor”. (Bukhari, 2017, Vol 34: Hadith 25)

There are many women working in different fields and we cannot deny that they greatly contribute in the field of economy. Although many Muslim women are seen as teachers, there are also some that worked in factories, companies. There are many fields wherein men are not

much expected such as in beauty salons, textile and boutique, birthing homes and etc. yet they greatly contribute to the economy.

Evidence shows that women's full participation in the economy drives better performing and more resilient businesses and supports economic growth and wider development goals for nations. (Revenga and Shetty, 2012)

Women working in medical field are highly needed in a society. 'As for medical profession, women doctors are badly needed in the field of gynecology and obstetrics. Usually women feel shy and even forbidden by Islam from consulting male doctor as per as possible in their ante-natal and post-natal treatment but if it is a question of life and death then in special circumstances it is permitted.

In Islam women are encouraged in medical profession'. (Patoari, 2019)

A working mother can have positive impacts to children's development as well. Singh gave detailed explanation in which he said:

A working mother with some sense of accomplishment and satisfaction can serve as a good role model for her children.

Children can get inspired to pursue their dreams and ambition. Mothers who effectively manage work and family, it develops ethical value towards work into their children.

They could especially help their daughters break stereotypes and work for whatever they wish to accomplish in life.

Working mothers have to manage a plethora of activities. They encourage their children to take responsibility. With both parents working, each family member has to play a more active role. Children learn skills that they would not learn otherwise. Raising independent children prepares them for the real world and inculcates in them sense of responsibility.

Working mothers spend quality time with their children to compensate for the amount of time they do not spend together. Children also look forward to spending time with their parents. They do not take their mother's attention for granted.

Children of a stay-at-home mother might get used to their mother's attention round the clock and fail to acknowledge her efforts.

The financial benefits that come with having both working parent, such as going to good schools and pursuing extra-curricular interests can inculcate a sense of security in children. (Singh, 2019)

2. Negative Impacts

Women working can be at the same time a wife a mother and a servant of God that has certain responsibilities and obligations.

From a religious perspective, her primary duty is to take good care of these responsibilities that is why men are obliged to procure the livelihood for the family and provide for her

needs. If she will be working at the same time she might neglect these obligations and that might cause imbalance in the system of the family resulting to undesirable results.

As what already have been mentioned, women's primary duty is to serve God and worship Him alone. As a human being, she has obligations that must be observed in her daily life such as performing the obligatory prayers, wearing her hijab properly and etc. She is also commanded to do fasting during the month of Ramadhan and such many other duties. Neglecting these obligations will be detrimental to her well being and to her spirituality.

Worship is the key to the door of a good life in the hereafter. This world will not be eternal and everyone in

this world will perish as stated in the holy Quran:

“Everyone on it must pass away”. (Quran, 55: 26)

This life is only a test for mankind. It is mentioned I the Holy Quran:

“Who created death and life that He may try you- which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving”. (Quran, 67: 2)

Working for a married woman means more tasks to do and this would mean that there is a possibility for her to have less time for worship or the worst case she will neglect worship. There are many forms of worship and there are obligatory and recommended worship; Of course for those who are not working there is more time to do

recommended worships such as reading Quran doing the recommended prayers, fasting and etc.

At the same time working has negative impacts to women being a servant of God; it can also affect other aspects of married woman's life. Workplace exposures have the potential to interfere with:

- Male and female hormonal systems
- Women's menstrual cycle
- Development and function of sperm and ova
- Process of fertilization and implantation
- Fetal growth and development
- Lactation of process

Many workingwomen faced a lot of ill health during their pregnancy and complications during childbirth along with ill health during postnatal period. *(Akhtar et al, 2018)*

A pregnant woman also needs additional rest. In the early pregnancy, the woman will feel tired as her body becomes accustomed to being pregnant. In the later stages of pregnancy, the growing baby uses more of the woman's energy and causes greater strains in her body. Reducing a pregnant woman's workload helps her to get more rest and keeps her healthier for the delivery. (*Chand, 2009*)

Mothers, in spite of having their kid's best interests at heart, might fail to provide their children a safe emotional outlet. They might not be enthusiastic to hear their children's issues after a hectic day at work. Children in such cases could resort to finding an outlet elsewhere or simply feel that their parents are not interested in their lives. (*Singh, 2019: 20*)

A study by *Nomaguchi and Milkie (2006)* examined whether or not people's perceptions of their parents was affected by their mother's employment (or lack thereof) during their childhood. Regardless of hours worked, children of mothers who worked reported less discipline from their mothers than those whose mothers did not work outside the home.

Those with working mothers also reported less support and more verbal assaults than those whose mothers did not work. (*DeJong, 2010*)

Problems can arise between parents over the mother's employment. Such parental conflict can adversely affect children. It could damage their self-esteem and make them insecure. If mothers bring their frustration home, children could develop a negative

attitude. They could perceive her work as a source of distress for their family. (Singh, 2019)

A woman represents various social roles within the family. The two most important and fundamental roles are to be a mother and a wife. (Gezova, 2015: 45-46)

If she failed to carry on these responsibilities, her family might collapse. This might cause for unwanted divorce or misguided children that can ultimately cause problems within the society.

Conclusion

Based from all the given details in this research, we can therefore conclude that married women are allowed to work from a religious perspective; but are subjected to certain conditions. They are allowed to work but they must not neglect their primary and most important duties as being the servants of God, wives and mothers.

In religious point of view, procuring a livelihood and supporting the family is the husband's obligation and a wife can even request for a divorce if a husband will neglect this duty. A wife is not obliged to work and procure the livelihood for the family but she is allowed in case it is necessary or it is not an impediment on her primary duties. She must also obtain permission from her husband before deciding to work.

Islam unlike any other religions and societies has given value and high status to women. She has been given rights and freedom. Islam pays respect and places high honor on women as they carried the humanity in their wombs and made the future generations be nurtured on their lap. They have the very important role as the wives and the mothers that would bring the progress or destruction in the society.

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